



MESSAGE

FROM MAYOR DAN GELBER

So, this morning this happened. We began to transport our residents over 75 years of age from our congregant living communities – like Rebecca Towers – to Mt. Sinai Hospital where they were among the first seniors in the state to receive their first vaccine shot. They received their shots easily and without any problems or adverse reactions. It was thrilling, reassuring and it brings home that we are finally at the beginning of the end of this dreadful period.

It is so important that everyone take the vaccine when it becomes available to you. In the same way that wearing a mask protects you and those around you, a vaccine protects everyone.

[Es muy importante que todos reciben la vacuna. Es segura y los protegerá.](#)

But there have been lots of questions about who gets the vaccine and how it is administered. And there is definitely some understandable confusion. So, let me try to answer some of your questions.

Let's begin with, who gets it first? Governor DeSantis issued an executive order directing that the vaccine be given, first, to residents and staff of long-term care facilities and front line health care workers and to those over 65 years of age. Hospitals may also give them to people who notwithstanding their age are especially vulnerable. This is slightly different from the CDC recommendation which also prioritized what are known as "essential workers." But because the decision rests with the Governor, in Florida we will follow his directive. In Miami-Dade County there are approximately 450,000 people over the age of 65. Different hospitals may alter slightly their distribution sequences. For instance, Mt. Sinai is giving the vaccine first to only those 75 and older, and when that population receives it, will then offer to those over 65.

After these initial groups receive the vaccine, which will take at least weeks, they will begin distribution to other population groups like essential workers, children and younger adults.

Next, there has been some confusion about where to get the vaccine. Permanent residents of long term care will get the vaccine at the facility where they live. The City expects to be able to deliver shots to homebound seniors who cannot get to a hospital. Most everyone else in the general public will go through hospitals and other health care providers to get their shots. As of yet, there is no uniform system for scheduling county-wide. So, for instance because Mt. Sinai was the first hospital in Miami-Dade to offer vaccines; it has received thousands of requests from all over the County, creating a demand likely well beyond its current capacity. Very soon and likely within days, more hospitals will begin offering the vaccine, so more options will become available. So you know, while the City is providing transportation and logistics, we are not deciding who gets shots.

Now all this attention on vaccinations could easily suggest we don't need to worry about the virus. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This morning the State Department of Health reported that

COVID-19 cases in Miami-Dade County surpassed 290,000 and 4,155 people in our County have succumbed to the virus. As was predicted, we continue to see very high numbers of infection and very high numbers of hospitalizations in our County over the holidays. So please don't endanger yourself or others by taking unnecessary risks, especially with New Years in just a few days. At this point, the vaccine has not in any manner changed your likelihood of getting the virus or the impact it could have on you. So please avoid crowds, don't create gatherings that are likely to spread the virus, wear the mask. Also, if you want to get your COVID test, [our convention center site will have modified hours New Year's eve and will be closed New Year's Day.](#)

Finally, Thursday evening is the end of 2020. And it couldn't have come fast enough. This year is one that is best viewed in the rear-view mirror. But even as we say good riddance to 2020, I want to thank some of those folks who in the worst of times displayed the best in us.

First and foremost, the heroes, and they are heroes, who cared for our community at great personal risk. The nurses, doctors and staff at Mt Sinai and other health care providers who confronted true peril to help so many survive. At least 63 of our residents passed away and many suffered difficult hospitalizations, but many more would have but for the bravery and professionalism of these folks. Thank you.

And to our City's first responders, cops and firemen and essential public facing workers, who recognized that their work needed to continue notwithstanding the risk, thank you.

To our volunteers who stepped up their efforts to help those in need especially in need of food, thanks for your efforts and donations. Over 1000 residents helped out, led by Commissioner David Richardson and his staff, and supported by City personnel. They organized 207 food distributions since March, sometimes providing groceries to as many as 1,000 residents on a single day.

This virus did test us in so many ways. Because of the way it spreads, it required so many to forego important aspects of their lives so that the virus wouldn't reach and hurt more people. Some gave up precious moments and milestones with their friends and family, others made financial sacrifices. Too many lost their jobs and even businesses. It's true I think that in the worst of moments, so many people tend to show their resiliency and kindness. So, to all of you who demonstrated patience and calm, and endured sacrifice so that others might be safer in 2020. Thank you, and thanks for the privilege of being your Mayor. Let's have a great year.